



## Burial 2

### JR156C



Findings  
Exhibits  
History  
Visiting  
Publications  
Resources  
Contact  
Donations



[Home](#): [Findings](#): [Fort Area](#): [Burials](#): Burial 2

During in-situ removal of the burial JR102 in 1996, *Jamestown Rediscovery* archaeologists discovered the outline of a second grave. Just a few feet away, the second grave was oriented on a similar northeast to southwest angle, and was probably dug within a few years of JR102.

The burial, called JR156, was excavated in 1997. A number of small artifacts and flecks of brick and charcoal in the grave fill indicated that the grave was probably later than JR102, which had relatively "clean" fill. The very earliest features on a site like Jamestown generally contain the fewest artifacts, while features even a few years later can contain more evidence of the increased activities going on within the fort.

Like JR102, JR156 was a coffin burial, although the coffin was quite different. The coffin in JR102 was six-sided and appeared to be flat-lidded, and it was evidenced only by soil stains and nails. In JR156, [some coffin wood survived](#) and the locations of the nails indicated a gabled lid. Although a coffin burial indicates that the individual may have had some status, gabled coffins were fairly common during the early 17th century. Analysis of the coffin wood revealed that it was built of yellow pine, a harder member of the pine family.



Oddly, although the coffin wood was fairly well preserved, the skeletal remains were not. The bones that survived were in very deteriorated condition. Fortunately, the skull was slightly elevated and could be removed intact. The skeleton was carefully drawn and photographed in place, then removed, although many of the bones were fragmentary. The position of the body indicated that, in addition to the coffin, the body had been tightly wrapped in a shroud.

Dr. Doug Owsley and Karin Bruwelheide of the Smithsonian Institute examined the skeleton in the field. Their preliminary conclusions were that JR156C was a caucasian woman, about 35 years old. She was very small, possibly only about 4'9" or so in height. She had only 5 teeth at the time of her death, the rest having been lost many years before. The cause of her death was not evident. Stable isotope analysis done on the bones indicated that she had a diet primarily of

wheat, rather than corn. This usually indicates a recently landed European.

Documents indicate that the first women at Jamestown were Mistress Forrest and her maid Anne Burras, who landed with the Second Supply in 1608. Anne Burras is known to have married John Laydon, and both were listed in the 1625 muster. Mistress Forrest, probably the wife of gentleman Thomas Forrest, is not mentioned again in the historical record, and may have died soon after her arrival at Jamestown. Scholars speculate that JR156 could be the grave of Mistress Forrest.

The JR156 skull was too fragile to do a make a mold for a "facial reconstruction" like the one made of JR102C. Instead, scientists made a [replica of the skull](#) using a CT scan to form a laser-cured, 3-dimensional resin model. From this model, sculptor Sharon Long [created an image](#) using the same methods she used for the facial reconstruction of JR102C. The resulting sculpture is one of only two likenesses of women from early Jamestown, the other being the engraved portrait of Pocahontas.

Copyright 1997, 2000 by The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities  
Comments [apva@apva.org](mailto:apva@apva.org)